SEQUENCE FOR PROCESSING SAMPLES 5.0.2

The order of sample collection, processing, and preservation for specific analytes should be determined before beginning field work and adhered to consistently. The recommended sequence for sample collection and processing is based on logistics for maintaining sample integrity and differs for ground-water and surface-water sampling. The recommended sequence can be modified, depending on the types of samples to be collected and on data objectives. In general, process samples in the order indicated on table 5-1.

- For ground-water sampling, the amount of well purging might affect concentrations of VOCs measured in the ground-water samples (Gibs and Imbrigiotta, 1990). Therefore, VOC samples are collected first.
- When sampling either surface water or ground water for inorganic analyses,
  - Filter trace-element samples first, as prescribed and explained in section 5.2 and in Horowitz and others (1994).
  - Next, filter nutrient, major ion, and other inorganic-constituent samples having concentrations that will not be appreciably affected as nominal pore size of the filter media decreases.
  - Filter the alkalinity sample (NFM 6) with the other anions.
- When composite samples of surface water are processed, samples for analysis of organic compounds usually are processed first and are taken from a noncontaminating compositing device separate from that for inorganic-constituent samples, unless a cone splitter is used (section 5.1).

Table 5-1. Recommended sequence for processing samples

1. Organic compounds—Raw (wholewater or unfiltered) samples first, followed by filtered samples. **Do not field rinse bottles.** Chill immediately a. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs). b. Pesticides, herbicides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other agricultural and industrial organic compounds.
2. Total organic carbon (TOC), dissolved organic carbon (DOC),[1] and suspended organic carbon (SOC). Chill immediately.
3. Inorganic constituents, nutrients, radiochemicals, isotopes: **For ground water,** filtered samples first, followed by raw samples. **For surface water,** raw samples first, followed by filtered samples. (Field rinse each bottle, as required.) a. Trace metals. b. Separate-treatment constituents (such as mercury, arsenic, selenium) and major cations. c. Major anions, alkalinity, and nutrients. Chill nutrients immediately. d. Radiochemicals and isotopes. (Bottle-rinse, filtration, and preservation requirements depend on analysis to be performed (section 5.6 and Appendix A5-C.)[2])
4. Radon and chlorofluorocarbons.[2] Do not rinse bottle.
5. Microorganisms (NFM 7).

[1]TOC and DOC samples can be collected whenever most appropriate for the specific field operation.

[2]Radon and chlorofluorocarbon and most isotope samples are collected outside of the processing chamber.